THE PILGRIM'S HOSPICE

DAVID SMITH

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THE PILGRIM'S HOSPICE

A LITTLE BOOK ON THE HOLY COMMUNION

By the Rev.
DAVID SMITH, M.A.
Author of "The Days of His Flesh"

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"Then said Christian to the porter, Sir, what house is this? and may I lodge here to-night? The porter answered, This house was built by the Lord of the hill, and he built it for the relief and security of pilgrims. . . .

"Now I saw in my dream, that thus they sat talking together until supper was ready. So when they had made ready, they sat down to meat. Now the table was furnished with fat things, and wine that was well refined; and all their talk at the table was about the Lord of the hill; as, namely, about what he had done, and wherefore he did what he did, and why he had builded that house. . . .

"Thus they discoursed together till late at night; and, after they had committed themselves to their Lord for protection, they betook themselves to rest. The pilgrim they laid in a large upper chamber, whose window opened towards the sun-rising: the name of the chamber was Peace."

JOHN BUNYAN.

To

MY FRIEND

MRS. WALTER DUNCAN

PREFACE

THIS little book is not a theological treatise. It propounds no theory; it advocates no dogma; it meddles with no controversy. It is an attempt to tell something of the comfort and sweetness which I have found in the ineffable Mystery of the Holy Communion; and if my readers are helped on their pilgrimage by what I have written, my purpose will be achieved.

D. S.

Tulliallan U.F. Manse,
Kincardine-on-Forth, N.B.

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I

THE HOUSE OF REFRESHMENT

THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT

O food of pilgrims lowly,
O bread of angels holy,
  O manna of the blest!
Hungry, do thou relieve us,
And on thy sweetness give us
  Our longing souls to feast.

O living stream that swellest,
Fountain of love that wellest
  Pure from the Saviour's breast!
Thirsty, do thou revive us;
This thou alone canst give us,
  And 'tis our one request.

O Jesus, bending lowly,
We greet Thy Face most holy
  Beneath this bread concealed;
To us may it be given,
With open eye in Heaven,
  To see that Face revealed.

Latin Hymn.

THE HOUSE OF REFRESHMENT

OME unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." Thus is this dear saying of Jesus rendered in the Latin Bible. And thus rendered it was associated by the devout men of medieval days with the sacred ordinance of the Lord's Supper. "Thou biddest me," says Thomas à Kempis, "confidently approach Thee, if I would have part with Thee; and accept the nourishment of immortality, if I desire to obtain eternal life and glory. 'Come,' sayest Thou, 'unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.' O sweet and friendly word in the sinner's ear, that

Mt. xi. 28.

De Imit. Chr. IV. i. 2, 13.

Thou, O Lord my God, invitest a poor and needy one unto the Communion of Thy most holy Body. Thanks unto Thee, good Jesus, eternal Shepherd, who hast deigned to refresh us, poor exiles, with Thy precious Body and Blood, yea, and invite us by Thine own mouth's accost to grasp these mysteries."

Now what, it may be asked, has this saying of Jesus to do with the Sacrament of the Supper? Consider how those holy men conceived of this earthly life. They pictured it after the manner of the Sacred Scriptures, which find its grand emblem in Israel's wanderings through the wilderness in quest of the Promised Land. Thus, it is written: "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." And again: "We are strangers before Thee, and sojourners,

Gen. xlvii. 9.

1 Chron. xxix. 15.

as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." And once more: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country . . . a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city."

Heb. xi. 13, 14, 16.

And even so it seemed to the medieval saints. In their eyes the life of faith was a pilgrimage, and believers were pilgrims toilsomely travelling through a strange and often hostile country to their home in the New Jerusalem. It was a long and difficult journey, and they grew weary, they hungered and thirsted, and their soul fainted in them.

Ps. cvii. 5.

And therefore their Lord, in His great kindness and compassion, had built a house of entertainment, a hostelry, an inn by the wayside, and had spread a table there for the refreshment of His travel-worn pilgrims. He stood at the open door, and, as they came toiling along the road, He hailed them and bade them turn aside and rest a while. "Come unto Me," He cried, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."

And this is the interpretation of the parable: The Hospice by the way is the Church, and the Feast for the refreshment of the weary pilgrims is the Lord's Table, the Holy Supper.

The parable is fraught with profitable instruction. It shows who and what manner of persons they are who have a title to participation in the Sacred Feast.

They are such as are "weary and heavy laden."

What sort of burden, it may be asked, does Jesus mean? A theologian might answer: "The burden of Sin." And truly this is the heaviest and most crushing of all burdens. But let us not limit the Lord's grace or put restrictions where He has put none. Sin is not the only burden, and even when it has been rolled from his back, there are other burdens beneath which a man may bow and groan. Poverty, anxiety, suffering, weakness, disappointment, loneliness, sorrow, mourning: these too are burdens, and there is none of the children of men that lacks his burden.

Sin may be the heaviest, but it is not the only burden; and Jesus, in the largeness of His compassion, says "all ye that labour and are heavy laden," without definition or restriction, that all may be included. To every

one who has a burden, whatsoever it may be, and feels the weight and the weariness of it, the invitation is addressed. For him the Hospice has been built, for him the Table has been spread, for him the door stands open.

Nevertheless there is a restriction. The Hospice has been built and the Table spread *for pilgrims*, and it is only to pilgrims that the invitation is addressed. We are all travellers—"travellers," as one has said, "betwixt two eternities," crossing the isthmus which divides the ocean whence we have come from the ocean whither we are going, and whither, with every step, every breath, every pulse-beat, we are drawing nearer. We are all travellers, but we are not all pilgrims. Some are mere homeless wanderers. They are not bound for the City of God. They have no hope beyond the

wilderness. They know not whither they are going.

And therefore, if we be in doubt whether the invitation is for us, let us bethink ourselves which we are—wanderers or pilgrims. Have we set forth in good earnest to go to the New Jerusalem? Are we asking the way to Zion with our faces thitherward? Are we day by day pressing on with the pilgrim's hope in our hearts and the pilgrim's song on our lips, and laying ourselves to rest each eventide with the great assurance that we are "a day's march nearer home"? Then the invitation is for us. We are pilgrims, and it is for pilgrims that the Hospice has been built and the Feast prepared.

Jer. l. 5.

But perhaps some one says: "I have indeed set forth on the pilgrimage, and I would fain pursue it to the end. But, alas! my strength is small; I am ever losing heart; I stumble,

I fall; I turn aside from the way, and forget the Heavenly Country and the City of God; yea, ofttimes I am tempted to think of them no more and be content with the poor delights which the wilderness affords."

It may be so; yet, despite your stumbling and falling, your fainting and forgetting, are you in your heart desiring the New Jerusalem, and ever rallying yourself and pushing forward? Then you are a pilgrim still. Courage! The Hospice was built and the Table spread for such as you. It is because pilgrims are weary and heavy laden that they need refreshment. "Consider, then, that this Sacrament is a singular medicine for all poor sick creatures, a comfortable help to weak souls, and that our Lord requireth no other worthiness on our part, but that we unfeignedly acknowledge our need of His healing and strengthening, and do truly cast

Book of Common Order.

ourselves upon Him." He is calling you to turn aside hither because you are weak and weary, that you may rest a while; may be cleansed from the soiling of the way; may be healed of your bruises; may eat of His provision; may hear from His gracious lips about the Country which lies before you and the glory which awaits you there; and may set forward on your pilgrimage with a braver heart and steadier steps.

Lord Jesus, we desire the Heavenly Country, and we have forsaken all that we may seek it. Thou knowest our weakness and weariness; for Thou wast once a man of sorrows, compassed with infirmity and in all points tempted like as we are. Thou knowest how wide is the wilderness and how rough the road; for Thou hast passed this way before us. We bless Thee that Thou hast thought

in great compassion of Thy poor pilgrims, and hast caused an House to be built and a Table to be furnished for us here. Gladly do we hearken to Thy voice which bids us turn aside and find refreshment for our souls. O satisfy us with the goodness of Thy House, that in the strength of this meat we may go forward on our pilgrimage, yea, go from strength to strength until we appear before God in Zion. Amen.

II

PREPARING THE GUEST-CHAMBER

A PRAYER TO GOD

O God, to Thee my love I give,
For Thou hast first loved me;
Thy bondsman would I rather live
Than walk at liberty.

Except Thy glory in my heart
May no remembrance be;
And be this still my only art,
How to lay hold on Thee.

Yea, whatsoe'er Thy will may be,
That will alone is mine;
All that I have Thou gavest me,
And I now make it Thine.

I render back Thy gift again:
Use it as pleaseth Thee.
I fear not what Thou shalt ordain,
Knowing Thou lovest me.

Love is the only gift I crave,
That I may Thine requite.
If this Thou givest, all I have;
All else are dreams of night.

Latin Hymn.

PREPARING THE GUEST-CHAMBER

ALL the days of His ministry Jesus was a homeless wanderer. "The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests; but the Son of Man had not where to lay His head." There was no dwelling in the land which He could call His own. At Capernaum He lodged under the grateful roof of Simon Peter, the Galilean fisherman; and in later days, when He went up to Jerusalem, He would, if He listed, be welcome to the house of His friend Lazarus of Bethany.

Mt. viii. 20.

It appears, however, that He did not lodge

there during the Passion Week. Perhaps it was that, aware how Lazarus was implicated with Him, He would not further exasperate the bloodthirsty rulers against that dear home by making it His abode. At all events during this last sojourn at the Capital He repaired each evening to the Mount of Olives and passed the night in the Garden of Gethsemane, couched on the dewy sward and sheltered by the olive-trees.

Jn. xii. 10-1.

Lk. xxi. 37, R.V.

He had no dwelling in Jerusalem, and this embarrassed the Twelve as the high solemnity drew near. It was necessary that Jesus should have somewhere to gather His "little children" and eat the Passover with them; and on the morning of the Preparation-day they approached Him and enquired: "Where wilt Thou that we go and prepare that Thou mayest eat the Passover?" He

Jn. xiii. 33.

Mk. xiv. 12.

was at no loss. He had already arranged the matter. He had conferred privily with a friend in the city, none other, it is said, than John Mark, afterwards St Mark the Evangelist, who resided in the sacred Capital with his mother Mary, a widow lady in affluent circumstances. Mark, if it was indeed he, had undertaken to accommodate Him with a room in his ample house. There Jesus would eat the Holy Supper with His disciples, and there He bade Peter and John make it ready.

Cf. Acts xii. 12.

Lk. xxii. 8.

And thus it came to pass that, though it was the Lord's Supper, the Lord had no hand in providing it. Mark furnished the room. And the room was not enough. The materials of the Feast were needed—the lamb, the unleavened bread, the wine, and the bitter herbs. Mark would gladly have provided these also, but Jesus desired

that others should participate in the sacred privilege, and He assigned this duty to Peter and John.

And it is even so still. It is the Lord's Table: He is the Host and we are His guests, yet He allows us the honour of providing and preparing the Feast. Every one has his part. When, according to the beautiful usage of the Scottish Church, the Elders, devout men had in reputation among the people, purchase the bread and wine and make them ready, and on the eve of the celebration adorn the holy House, arranging the tables and spreading them with fine linen, clean and white, they are performing the office which fell to Peter and John on that great Day of Preparation. And all the communicants bear their part. Theirs is the part of Mark and Mary: they provide the Guest-chamber.

What is the Guest-chamber? It is the Church, the Holy House where we meet in the fellowship of faith and lift up our hearts to Jesus. Our fathers built it for His glory, and they bequeathed it to us their children, a precious heritage, hallowed by tender memories and associations; and there rests on us the sacred obligation of maintaining it by the offerings of our devotion and the service of our hands.

This is our part—to provide, like Mark and Mary, the Lord's Guest-chamber. Do we perform it in their spirit? They gave the best they had. It was a *large* room, though the company was small and needed little space. It was an *upper* room, remote from noise and interruption. It was *furnished*, literally *strewn*, which means that there were coverlets on the couches and rugs on the floor. It was a spacious and peaceful apart-

ment, bravely furnished. Mark and Mary gave the Lord their best.

And should we not furnish the holy Guest-chamber to the utmost of our resources? If Jesus were here now as in the days of His flesh, and came to your door desiring entertainment, would you not accord Him a glad and reverent welcome? You would spread your table with your choicest fare; you would put Him in the place of honour; you would give Him your best room and your softest couch. Bethink you, your Church is the Guest-chamber which He has asked you to make ready for Him. Should you not furnish it as bravely as you may, sparing no pains, grudging no sacrifice, stinting yourself, if need be, of comfort, that it may be worthily adorned for His reception? It may be little that you have to give; but, if you give what you have, He will be well pleased. It is not the

grandeur of the House that He regards, but the love which has gone to the building and furnishing of it.

Yea, let us not forget that more is required than the Guest-chamber and the Feast. These, though ever so splendid, are worthless in His eyes, if faith and love and desire be lacking. "The gift without the giver is bare." He seeks a welcome; and, if that be accorded, the House, though mean, is goodly, and the Feast, though poor, is rich in His sight. He will enter, kind and gracious, and bless the Feast and make the House glorious with His presence.

Our pitiful Lord, Light of the eyes that see Thee and Life of the souls that love Thee, we long for Thy communion, and we have furnished this house and prepared this feast for Thee. The house is narrrow and low, but it

was built and garnished in faith and love; the feast is poor and scanty, but we have provided it out of our penury. It is little that we offer; but it is all that we have, and we would give Thee better if we could. Come in, Thou Gracious One, and sojourn with us. Fill this bare house with Thy glory, and it will be none other than the House of God and the Gate of Heaven. Bless this poor provision, and it will be a royal Feast. Amen.

III

THE LORD'S DESIRE FOR THE FEAST

"God loves to be longed for, He longs to be sought,
For He sought us Himself with such longing and love;
He died for desire of us, marvellous thought!
And He yearns for us now to be with Him above."

Faber.

THE LORD'S DESIRE FOR THE FEAST

THE first word that Jesus addressed to the Twelve when they had taken their places at table in the Upper Room, was a gratified exclamation. "With desire," said He, "I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." It was as though He had said: "I am glad to be with you here. I have hoped for this hour, I have planned for it; and now it has come." Lk. xxii. 15.

What did He mean? Let us consider the circumstances. He had come up to Jerusalem not merely to keep the Feast of the Passover but to die; and all the days of His sojourn in the sacred Capital His heart had been over-

flowing with affection and solicitude for His disciples. "Now before the Feast of the Pass-

Jn. xiii. 1, R.V., marg.

over," says St John, recalling his dear Lord's every look and tone at that dread crisis, "Jesus knowing that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the uttermost." He had loved them all along, but then He loved them with surpassing fondness. The word implies here *demonstrations of affection*. His tenderness overflowed in look and gesture, in caress and endearment.

It was the tenderness of imminent farewell. His heart was full at the thought of leaving them, and He desired a quiet season that, alone with the men whom He had chosen out of the world and who, amid all their weakness

Lk. xxii. 28.

and fainting, had proved nobly faithful, "continuing with Him in His temptations," He

might commune with them and fortify them for the impending ordeal. It seemed, however, as though He would be disappointed of His desire. That sacred week was so crowded with activities. It was a continuous succession of controversies, excitements, and alarms.

Nay, He would not be disappointed. He perceived His opportunity. On the evening which, according to the Jewish reckoning, ushered in the fifteenth day of the month Nisan, the City would be still. Every household would be within doors, celebrating the ancient sacrament which commemorated Israel's deliverance from Egypt; and He would celebrate it with His "little children" in the Guest-chamber which Mark and Mary had promised to provide. This would be His opportunity for the quiet communion which He craved; and all through those tumultuous days He had been looking forward to it.

And now it has come. "With desire," He exclaims exultantly, "I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. I am glad to be with you here. I have longed and planned for this meeting, and now My desire is attained."

It was not of Himself that He was thinking. He did not mean to fortify His own soul for the impending ordeal. There is nothing more striking in the story of those last days than His utter self-forgetfulness. His solicitude was all for His disciples. Even when He foretold how they would be made to stumble and would be scattered, every man to his own, and leave Him alone, He was not upbraiding them. "It is written," He said, "'I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad.'" His heart was grieved not for His own desolation but for the sore plight of His feeble and defenceless sheep, shepherdless

Jn. xvi. 32.

Mk. xiv. 27, R.V.

amid ravening wolves. He was the True Shepherd to the last.

It was for His disciples' sakes that He had desired that meeting in the Upper Room. He would fain comfort them against the day of trial. And how did He do it? First, He showed them the real significance of the seeming disaster. It fortified a Jew as nothing else could, if he were able to believe that what befell was according to the Scriptures. If he could say: "Thus it is written," he was of good courage; for then he knew that it was no accident and no infliction of human malice but a divine appointment, the working out of "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." And this consolation Jesus gave to His troubled disciples. "I say unto you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'And He was reckoned with transgressors': for that

Acts ii. 23.

Lk. xxii. 37, R.V.

which concerneth Me hath fulfilment." He
Rev. xiii. 8. was the true Paschal Lamb, slain, in the eternal counsel, from the foundation of the world. And therefore His Death was no catastrophe, no triumph of human enmity. It came to pass in fulfilment of God's redeeming purpose.

Again, He instituted a memorial of Himself that He might never be forgotten. He took the ancient Feast and invested it with a new significance. "Observe it," He said, "in all generations till I come again; but, when ye observe it, think no more of your fathers and their deliverance from Egypt: think of Me and My infinite Sacrifice. This broken bread is My body, this out-poured wine My blood of the Covenant that is shed for many. This do in remembrance of Me."

It is very remarkable what the Lord chose to be remembered by—not His teaching nor

His miracles but His Death. Had He left it to His disciples to institute a memorial of Him in the Church, they would surely have devised a far different rite. The ecclesiastical chronicler of the fourth century tells how in the course of his wanderings in quest of information he visited the city of Cæsarea Philippi, and found there an old house. At the gate stood a monument: two brazen figures on a lofty pedestal of stone—a kneeling woman and a man standing erect and reaching out his hand toward her. It was the house of the woman with the issue of blood, whose name, tradition said, was Veronica; and the figures represented herself and Jesus. It was a monument of her meeting with Him that day at Capernaum when He healed her of her deadly sickness; and she had erected it in grateful commemoration of His mercy.

Eus. *H.E.* vii. 18.

Mt. ix. 20-2 = Mk. v. 25-34 = Lk. viii. 43-8.

And even so, had Jesus left it to His disciples to institute a memorial of Him in the Church, would they not have devised a rite commemorative of the wondrous things which He had wrought or spoken? But He devised one which commemorates what He suffered. He chose to be remembered by His Death. He appointed those symbols of His broken body and His out-poured blood, and He said: "*This* do in remembrance of Me. When ye think of Me, turn your eyes to Calvary."

And truly His Death is supremely memorable. It was the consummation of His infinite Sacrifice, the farthest reach of His redeeming Love. When He had yielded His life in steadfast devotion to His Father's glory and patient travail for the souls of men, what more was possible? "Greater love
Jn. xv. 13. hath no man than this, that a man lay down

his life for his friends." "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Christ crucified is God at His best and highest. "For this," says Clement of Alexandria, "is the greatest and kingliest work of God—to save mankind." Rom. v. 8 *Pædag.* i. 12.

Our Blessed Saviour, how excellent is Thy loving-kindness! We are poor and needy, yet Thou thinkest upon us. It were wondrous grace if only Thou wert willing to receive us, but, behold, Thou hast manifested a yet more wondrous grace. Thou hast loved us with an everlasting love; Thou hast come all the way from Thy glory in quest of us; and Thou art ever yearning after us with tender and compassionate desire. The thought fills us with astonishment, yea, and with great boldness. We reach out to Thy

mercy; we respond to Thy love; we yield ourselves to Thy grace, that we may be Thine in life, in death, and in Eternity. Amen.

IV

PURGING OUT THE OLD LEAVEN

THE DIVINE IMAGE

"To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
All pray in their distress,
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

"For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
Is God our Father dear;
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
Is man, his child and care.

"For Mercy has a human heart;
Pity, a human face;
And Love, the human form divine;
And Peace, the human dress.

"Then every man, of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine:
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

"And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk, or Jew.
Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell,
There God is dwelling too."

William Blake.

PURGING OUT THE OLD LEAVEN

HEN the Children of Israel went out of Egypt, they went in haste. It was a sudden deliverance, and they ate the Supper ere their departure as travellers ready for a journey and eager to be gone. "Thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's passover." And there was haste not only in the eating but in the preparation of it. The bread was baked without leaven. There was no time for the customary process. "They were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry."

Exod. xii. 11.

Exod. xii. 39.

And this usage they maintained in succeed-

ing ages by way of remembrance. They ate unleavened bread at the Paschal Supper, and throughout the Holy Week they had no leaven in their dwellings. "Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life."

Deut. xvi. 3.

It lent additional force to the prescription that "leaven" had a figurative use in Jewish speech, signifying the working of evil affections in the soul. "Lord of Eternity," prayed one of the Rabbis, "it is open and known in Thy sight that we desire to do Thy will. Subdue that which hindereth, to wit, the leaven which is in the lump."

With exceeding scrupulosity the Jews observed the prescription and diligently cleared

their houses of leaven at the approach of the Holy Feast. If any were overlooked and suffered to remain, it polluted the offering and invalidated the celebration. "If," it is written in the paschal rubric, "a man be on the way to offer his paschal lamb, and it come into his mind that he has leaven in his house, if he can return and remove it, and then return to his office, let him return and remove it; but, if he cannot, let him destroy it in his heart."

Our Lord came not to abrogate the ancient Law but to fulfil it; and, ever exalting the spirit above the letter, He took this Jewish prescription and gave it a loftier interpretation. "If," He said with evident reference to that article of the paschal rubric, "thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before

Mt. v. 23-4, R.V.

the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." And St Paul taught the same lesson when he wrote to the Corinthians: "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened. For our Passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ: wherefore let us keep the Feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

1 Cor. v. 6-8, R.V.

See here one condition of worthy participation in the Holy Feast. Purge your heart of the old leaven of malice and wickedness. Bear no grudge against a fellow-creature. If you have wronged your brother, hasten and put yourself right with him. Make reparation

to him. Yea, and if he have wronged you, forgive him and cast out of your heart every thought of bitterness and resentment. Then come and take your place at the Table of the Lord. His peace will not visit a soul which is tainted with the leaven of unkindness and enmity.

If we would be at peace with God, we must be at peace with our fellow-men. Often and most earnestly is this truth inculcated in the Scriptures? "If," says Jesus, "ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." And St Paul says: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and railing be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you." And

Mt. vi. 14-5.

Eph. iv. 31-2, R.V.

St John puts it very strongly: "If a man say, 'I love God,' and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." This is in truth the master-thought of St John's theology—love to God exhibited by love to men. It is related that, while he lingered at Ephesus in extreme old age, he would have himself carried by his disciples to the Church, and, too feeble to discourse any longer to the brethren, he would repeat ever the same injunction: "Little children, love one another." Weary of often hearing it, they remonstrated: "Master, why dost thou always say this?" "Because," he replied, "it is the Lord's precept, and, if only it be done, it is enough."

1 Jn. iv. 20-1, R.V.

St Jerome on Gal. vi. 10.

"Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy." Mt. v. 7.

"I need Thy mercy for my sin;
But more than this I need,—
Thy mercy's likeness in my soul
For others' sin to bleed.

"'Tis not enough to weep my sins;
'Tis but one step to Heaven.
When I am kind to others, then
I know myself forgiven."

There is an Oriental fable, full of truth, which tells how Abou ben Adhem one night had a vision of an angel writing in a golden book. "What writest thou?" he enquired. And the angel answered: "The names of those that love the Lord." "And is mine there?" asked Abou. "Nay," said the angel, "it is not here." "Then," prayed Abou humbly, "if I be not counted as one who loves the Lord, write me down as one who loves his fellow-men." Next night the angel reappeared and

showed Abou his golden book; and, behold, to his exceeding comfort, his name was written there among those that loved the Lord. Because he loved his fellow-men, he was counted with those that loved the Lord. And it is always thus that the Lord reckons.

Mt. xxv. 40. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

And therefore, if we would sit worthily at His Table and have communion with Him, we must purge out the old leaven of malice and wickedness, and look on our fellows with gentle eyes and think of them with kindly hearts. "If thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

Perhaps it may seem as though there were nothing for us in this but discouragement. There is so little love in our hearts, so much uncharity, and our ill affections are so hard to uproot. If the houses of our souls must be purged of the old leaven ere we approach the Lord's Table, then we must remain away.

Nay, let us consider this further. The Holy Sacrament has a sanctifying efficacy. It does not merely command, it also succours. It bids us harbour no unkindly thought, and if only we reverently and believingly approach it, it cleanses and softens our hearts and endues them with grace and gentleness.

In the exercise of the Holy Communion the Love of Jesus is brought to our remembrance and set by moving symbol before our eyes. We behold Him "wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities";

and the spectacle slays our pride and enmity and awakens within us an exceeding tenderness. "What else," asks St Bernard of Clairvaux, "can the consideration of a compassion so great and undeserved, of a love so free and in such wise proved, of a condescension so unexpected, of a gentleness so unconquerable, of a sweetness so amazing—what, I say, can the diligent consideration of these things do but deliver utterly from every evil passion the soul of him that considers them and hale it unto them in sorrow, exceedingly affect it, and make it despise in comparison with them whatsoever can be desired only in their despite?"

De Dilig. Deo.

Keep then the image of the Crucified before your eyes. Come all unloving to the Holy Feast, and you will learn to love. Its sweetness will sweeten the bitterness of your heart.

Gentle Jesus, who didst drink the cup of suffering for all mankind, teach me to appraise my fellows by Thine infinite Sacrifice. Let me never grieve Thee, never turn away Thy face from me, by unseemly carriage toward the purchase of Thy precious Blood. Saviour most kind, most pitiful, most patient, as my hope is in Thy mercy, make me kind, make me pitiful, make me patient. Pour Thy love into my heart till it overflow, that I may be as a fountain of love in a loveless world. Amen.

V

WASHING THE FEET

"Give me the lowest place: not that I dare
Ask for that lowest place, but Thou hast died
That I might live and share
Thy glory by Thy side.

"Give me the lowest place: or if for me
That lowest place too high, make one more low
Where I may sit and see
My God, and love Thee so."

Christina G. Rossetti.

WASHING THE FEET

THE Twelve were Jews, and they shared the common expectation of a worldly Messiah, a victorious King of the lineage of David, who should drive out the heathen and make Israel free and great. It evinces very strikingly what majesty there was in Jesus that, though He came in lowliness, the very opposite of what, as they believed, the Messiah should be, they yet accepted Him as the Redeemer and King of Israel. And they justified their faith by the theory that His lowliness was only a temporary concealment of His majesty, and He would presently put off His disguise and take unto Him His great power and reign.

It were indeed unjust to allege that they attached themselves to Him for selfish and worldly motives. They left all and followed Him because He had won their hearts, and they clung to Him in spite of disappointment and disillusionment because the longer they companied with Him the more they realised the wonder of His grace and the glory of His Person. Yet there mingled with their love a baser sentiment. They anticipated a worldly recompense. When their Master came to His Kingdom, He would requite His faithful followers with high offices and rich emoluments. And this expectation awoke unholy rivalry in their breasts. They were incessantly disputing which should be the greatest in the Kingdom, which should have the posts of honour by His throne and sit on His right hand and on His left. Yea, even when the death-toils were closing about Him,

Mk. ix. 34.

Mk. x. 37.

they continued hugging their fond illusion. The issue, they reasoned, was imminent. He must now cease from His strange procrastination and confound His adversaries by flashing forth in majesty and might.

Jesus was ever reproving their carnal ambition and seeking to instil into their minds a truer and more spiritual conception. He told them plainly that His goal was not a throne in Jerusalem but a cross on Calvary. The announcement, however, seemed to them so incredible that they could not take it in. "They understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, and they perceived not the things that were said."

Mt. xx. 17-9.

Lk. xviii. 34, R.V.

On that solemn night when they gathered in the Upper Room, the old rivalry was smouldering in their breasts, and "there arose a contention among them which of them is accounted to be greatest." Jesus

Lk. xxii. 24, R.V.

was deeply grieved, and He presently administered to them an impressive rebuke.

Jn. xiii. 4-5, R.V. He "riseth from supper, and layeth aside His garments; and He took a towel and girded Himself. Then He poureth water into the bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded."

What did He mean by this singular procedure? It was an acted parable based on a proverb which was current all over the East. Candidates for initiation into the ancient Mysteries were required to prepare themselves by ceremonial ablution. They were about to enter upon holy ground, and their feet had to be washed ere they trod it. Hence the phrase "with unwashed feet" passed into a proverb. It signified "without due preparation," and it was used of one who essayed a task without the

requisite equipment, or pronounced, with a novice's glibness, on a question which demanded serious investigation, "exercising himself in great matters and in things too high for him." Ps. cxxxi. 1.

This familiar and expressive proverb Jesus employed to rebuke the selfish and worldly ambition of the Twelve. He did not quote it: He acted it after the histrionic manner of the Prophets; nor would the disciples fail to perceive His purpose. It was as though He had said: "Would you be initiated into the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven? That Kingdom's law is service and its spirit love. If you would enter it, you must be cleansed from self-seeking and worldly-mindedness. Presume not to intrude into it 'with unwashed feet.'" This was the irony of the situation, that, while they were hotly disputing which of them should be *Cf.* Mt. xiii. 11.

greatest in the Kingdom, they were shutting themselves out of it.

It was not for desiring to be great in the Kingdom that Jesus was displeased with the Twelve. Their offence was that they had a false notion of greatness, thinking that it lay in lordship and authority over one's fellows. That was the world's ideal of greatness, and Jesus set a new ideal before them—one not merely different from that which they had entertained, but directly opposite to it.

Mt. xx. 25-7, R.V.

"Ye know," He said, "that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant." In the Kingdom of Heaven the lowly path of service is the highway to honour. The

greatest is he who makes himself the least; the highest, he who takes the lowest place; the most honourable, he who is the servant of all, abounding in loving ministration.

Such was the manner of Jesus. He was "meek and lowly in heart." He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." And, when the Twelve fell a-striving for the pre-eminence in the Upper Room, He appealed to the example which He had constantly set before them. "Whether," He asked, "is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am in the midst of you as he that serveth." "Ye call Me 'Master,' and 'Lord': and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given

Mt. xi. 29.

Mt. xx. 28.

Lk. xxii. 27, R.V.

Jn. xiii. 13-5, R.V.

you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

And here is another condition of worthy participation in the Holy Feast. Is there something of the Lord's Spirit in us? something of His meekness and lowliness of heart, His self-effacement, His devotion to the Father's will, His readiness to spend and be spent in the service of our fellow-men?

Alas! our souls are but barely furnished with these Christlike graces; yet let us not think that we are therefore excluded from the Holy Feast. It was ordained for the purifying of our souls and the enkindling of His love within us. It is told of St Elizabeth of Hungary that she refused to wear her coronet in the Church because the Crucifix which hung there was crowned with thorns.

"How could I flaunt this bauble in His face
Who hung there, naked, bleeding, all for me—
I felt it shamelessness to go so gay."

And even so are we affected when we approach this sacred Feast with believing hearts and reverently ponder what it means. It is the commemoration of the supreme Sacrifice which crowned that holy life of self-forgetting, self-abasing love. It brings Christ crucified before our eyes, and that soul-subduing spectacle humbles our arrogance and puts our selfishness to shame.

"When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride."

O Jesus, the Joy of Heaven, the Well-beloved of the Father from everlasting, though Thou wast rich, yet for our sakes Thou becamest poor, that we through Thy poverty might become rich. Forgive our

foolish pride, our heartless ambition, our jealous striving after our own advantage, our greedy snatching at the prizes of life. May Thy Humiliation teach us humility; may Thine infinite Sacrifice put our selfishness to shame; may Thy wondrous Love kindle an answering love in our cold hearts. As Thou hast made Thyself one with us in all our misery, make us one with Thee in Thy charity and meekness here and in Thy glory hereafter. Amen.

VI

THE COVENANT OF BLOOD

THE LORD'S PASSION

Jesus, all my desire,
My soul's unfailing rest!
Thy cruel Cross a quenchless fire
Enkindles in my breast.

Mine is each bitter pang,
Mine all the deep distress,
When there I see my Treasure hang
In utter nakedness.

O Jesus, may Thy tears
Thine anguish sore and sad,
Succour my soul from all her fears
And make her ever glad.

The nails that pierce Thy feet
And hands Love's arrows be;
Wound me therewith with wounding sweet,
Rive my heart mightily.

Jesus, my heart would be
Upon Thy Body fed.
Within Thy Heart O shelter me—
The Heart that for me bled.

And in Death's awful strait,
By Thy sore wounds I pray,
O Jesus, may Thy Passion great
Take all my sins away.

Latin Hymn.

THE COVENANT OF BLOOD

THE Lord's Supper is not merely a commemoration of His Sacrifice. It is an interpretation of it. He instituted it in order that, as often as we celebrate it, we may not only have His Death brought vividly to our remembrance but understand what it means and realise what blessings it procures and ratifies for believers.

After He had brought the Children of Israel out of Egypt, the Lord crowned His mercy by entering into a covenant with them at Mount Sinai. A covenant is an agreement betwixt two, securing on a certain condition a certain advantage. The advantage under the covenant at Mount Sinai was that the

Lord should be their God and they His people; and the condition was that they should observe His Law. "And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgements: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, 'All the words which the Lord hath spoken will we do.'"

Exod. xxiv. 3, R.V.

It was accounted necessary in ancient days, in order that a covenant might be binding, that it should be ratified by a sacrifice; and the covenant at Sinai was sealed with this solemn sanction. "Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the mount, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And He sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the

Cf. Ps. l. 5

Exod. xxiv. 4-8, R.V., marg.

blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, 'All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient.' And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you upon all these conditions.'"

That a covenant may stand, the annexed condition must be observed. The Lord would have fulfilled His engagement, "for the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance;" but the Children of Israel proved unfaithful. In the pathetic language of Scripture, "they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves down unto them: they turned aside quickly out of the way wherein their fathers walked, obeying the commandments of the Lord; but they

Rom. xi. 29, R.V.

Jud. ii. 17, R.V.

did not so." And therefore the covenant was cancelled. "They rebelled, and grieved His Holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy." He abandoned them to the lust of their hearts, and they suffered disaster after disaster till they were stricken with the final blow, the Babylonian Captivity, and laid in the very dust.

Is. lxiii. 10, R.V.

But that was not the end.

"What began best, can't end worst,
Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst."

His heart still yearned for them. "He remembered the days of old, Moses, and His people." He could not let them go, and He turned to them in their misery. He raised up a prophet in their midst, and charged him with a message of hope. They had broken the first covenant, but He would grant them a fresh opportunity and enter into a new and better covenant with them. "Behold, the

Is. lxiii. 11.

days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord': for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more."

jer. xxxi. 31-4, R.V.

This glad era was ushered in by the Lord Jesus Christ, "the Mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises;" and, since it was necessary that a covenant should be ratified by a sacrifice, He, the true Paschal Lamb, at once Victim and Priest, sealed the new covenant with His own precious blood. Thus it was that He interpreted His Death in the Upper Room. "He took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins.'" His Death was not simply a sacrifice. It was a sacrifice for the ratification of a covenant, the new and better Covenant; and it confirms every one who believingly participates in it, in sure and inalienable possession of that Covenant's blessings.

Heb. viii. 6, R.V.

Mt. xxvi. 27-8, R.V.

The sacrifice at Mount Sinai ratified the

old covenant between God and the Children of Israel, forasmuch as it signified their response to His appeal, their acceptance of His conditions, and their engagement to observe these faithfully. And it is even so that our Lord's Sacrifice ratifies the New Covenant. It is our sacrifice, humanity's offering to God; for He is our Representative, and He "offered Himself without spot unto God" in our name and on our behalf. And, that we may enter into the Covenant and appropriate its blessings, we have only to acknowledge Him as our Representative and say Amen to His vicarious work; we have only to approach the Throne of Mercy in our sin and weakness, and point to that Holy Life laid, in utter devotion to the Father's Will, on the Altar of Calvary, making it our offering and presenting it to God as the life which we fain would live.

Heb. ix. 14.

And thus we lay our sins on Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God, and, making His Sacrifice our formula at once of confession and of consecration, win by it acceptance and peace. "O God," we pray, "most righteous and holy, we dare not approach unto Thee on our own merit; for we are a people laden with iniquities. Turn away Thy Face, we beseech Thee, from our manifold offences, and look upon Thy Beloved Son, our Elder Brother. We desire to be even thus pleasing unto Thee, Thy sons without rebuke. And He is our Surety. We are what we are, but we would fain be like Him and by His grace we shall be conformed to His image. See us in Him, and accept us for His sake. Amen."

VII

THE COVENANT OF HOSPITALITY

TO JESUS

Dear Jesus! Thou camest, Thy glory forsaking,
In quest of Thy sheep that had wandered away.
Sweet Jesus! true Shepherd! on me pity taking,
O draw me unto Thee no longer to stray.

I am the lost sheep in misery lying;
From Hell's mouth devouring, Jesus, me free.
If thou cleanse me from sin in the blood of Thy dying,
O Jesus, my soul's love Thy guerdon shall be.

Thou comfort of sadness, Thou heart of all gladness,
Love, Fountain of grace, Delight of all lands,
Good Saviour, true Shepherd! from th' Enemy's madness
Protect me, and pluck me at death from his hands.

Jesus, how fair Thou art, Spouse of my ravished heart,
Than honey more sweet, more serene than the sun!
May Thy free grace relieve me, Thy mercy forgive me,
Thy glory receive me when life's course is run.

Latin Hymn.

THE COVENANT OF HOSPITALITY

THERE was another sacrament no less reverend in Oriental eyes and no less potent for the ratification of a covenant than the blood of sacrifice. It was the sacrament of food. Let men once eat in company, sharing table and salt, and they were forthwith bound one to the other by an inviolable bond, yea, though they had aforetime been enemies and had eaten together only by accident or inadvertence. It is told of a Bedouin sheikh whose son had been slain by an unknown hand, that, while his sorrow was yet green, a stranger came to his tent craving food and rest, and was welcomed with the generous hospitality which obtains

among the sons of the desert. As they communed, the sheikh discovered that the stranger was none other than the slayer of his son. His impulse was to rise and smite him; but the stranger had eaten from his dish and drunk from his cup, and the bond of hospitality restrained him. He sat in silence, his soul burning within him; and, when the meal was ended, he led him to his son's grave and told him who lay under the mound of sand; and he bade him haste away lest the lust for vengeance should prevail and drive him to sin against the sacred covenant of hospitality.

There are frequent instances of this impressive idea on the pages of Holy Scripture. Thus, it is related that during the conquest of Canaan the men of Gibeon heard of the invincible prowess of Joshua and his troops and, fearing destruction, devised a wily

stratagem. "They went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine-skins, old and rent and bound up; and old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and was become mouldy. And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, 'We are come from a far country: now therefore make ye a covenant with us.' . . . And the men took of their provision, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord. And Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them." Three days later the deceit was discovered. "They heard that they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt among them." Yet they durst not smite them; for they had "taken of their

Josh. ix. 4-6, 14-5, R.V.

provision" and thus were bound to them by the covenant of food.

And in the twenty-third Psalm the idea is turned to a religious use.

Ps. xxiii. 5, R.V. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over."

The shepherd-psalmist here describes a scene such as he may well have witnessed while he tended his sheep on the lone pastures of the wilderness. Perhaps he had himself acted the gallant part which he so vividly pourtrays. A traveller has been assailed by brigands and is fleeing for dear life with his enemies in hot pursuit. Where can he find a refuge on the broad open? Ah! yonder is a dark speck on the shimmering horizon. It is a nomad's brown tent, and thither he urges his headlong flight. As he

draws nearer, he descries the shepherd at the tent-door, shading his eyes with his left hand to watch the chase, and gripping in his sinewy right hand the gnarled club wherewith he is wont to protect his sheep from marauders. If only the fugitive can arrive and grasp the tent-cord ere the pursuers overtake him, by the guest-law of the desert he will have a right to shelter and protection. He strains his quivering and flagging limbs till, just in time, he sinks breathless at the shepherd's feet.

And the stalwart and big-hearted son of the desert acknowledges his claim and, standing club in hand over the prostrate form, defies the baffled foemen. He raises the trembling suppliant, conducts him within the open tent, sets him at table, and puts meat and drink before him, ratifying the covenant of hospitality in the very face of his enemies.

Nay, he exceeds the guest-law's requirements. He does not simply admit the fugitive to his tent and bind himself to his protection by the bond of food. He welcomes him to his very heart and treats him as a dear and honoured friend. ***He anoints his head with oil.*** At ancient feasts that was a tribute of special courtesy; and, when Simon the Pharisee de-
Lk. vii. 46. sired to impress with a befitting sense of social inferiority the Prophet of the People whom he had honoured with a place at his proud board, he paid it to the other guests and withheld it from Jesus. Also ***he fills his cup to overflowing;*** and that was another mark of honour, for in ancient days a large portion was a token of peculiar regard. Remember what Joseph did when, unknown by them, he entertained his brethren in
Gen. xliii. 34. Egypt. "He took and sent messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's

mess was five times so much as any of theirs."

Such is the Psalmist's parable, and it might have been written of the Sacrament of the Holy Supper. It is even thus that the Lord, the Good Shepherd, binds us unto Him by the covenant of hospitality, bringing us, weary pilgrims, harassed and hunted, into His House of Wine and spreading over us the banner of His love. "Eat, O friends," is His invitation; "drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." And forthwith we are bound, He to us and we to Him, by a sacred covenant, which it were the extremest impiety to break. Here lay the peculiar odiousness of the treachery of Judas. "As they sat and were eating, Jesus said, 'Verily I say unto you, One of you shall betray Me, even he that eateth with Me.'" Thus it had been written: "Mine own familiar

Song ii. 4 (marg.), v. 1.

Mk. xiv. 18, R.V.

Ps. xli. 9; cf. Jn. xiii. 18.

friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of My bread, hath lifted up his heel against Me."

It is the very essence of the Holy Communion that it is the ratification of a covenant, and it is a wondrous discovery of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that He should deign to enter into a covenant with us, frail and sinful children of men. And does not this impose upon us a sacred obligation? Our honour is at stake. We have bound ourselves by a double bond. We have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice and have been sprinkled with blood before His holy Altar. And we have sat at His Table, guests in His House of Love. We have eaten of His bread and drunk of His cup, swearing fidelity by this most tender sacrament. And He has accepted our pledges. He is trusting us. Shall we belie His confidence and disappoint

His expectation? Shall we break our faith and lay our honour in the dust?

O Jesus, Thine is an utter condescension. Was not Thy promise sufficient that Thou hast bound Thyself unto us by covenant-bonds? We are Thy debtors, yet Thou hast called us Thy friends and pledged Thyself to do a friend's part by us in all truth and faithfulness. Thou wilt never be false to us: O forbid that we should ever be false to Thee or do despite to so dear and blessed a fellowship. May we never forget the relation in which we stand and the bonds which bind us unto Thee. Amen.

VIII

THE HEAVENLY FEAST

"Ah, my sweet home, Hierusalem,
Would God I were in thee!
Would God my woes were at end,
Thy joys that I might see!

"Thy gardens and thy gallant walks
Continually are green.
There grows such sweet and pleasant flowers
As nowhere else are seen.

"Quite through the streets, with silver sound,
The flood of Life doth flow;
Upon whose banks on every side
The wood of Life doth grow.

"The trees for evermore bear fruit,
And evermore do spring;
There evermore the angels sit,
And evermore do sing.

"Hierusalem, my happy home,
Would God I were in thee!
Would God my woes were at an end,
Thy joys that I might see!"

Signed F.P.B. in British Museum MS.;
printed in 1601.

THE HEAVENLY FEAST

IF ever there was a divinely ordered institution on the earth, it was the ancient Tabernacle of Israel's love and reverence. It was built to Moses' direction by cunning workmen "filled with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship." It was built to Moses' direction but not to his design. The design was God's, and it was revealed to Moses during his forty days and forty nights of heavenly communion on Mount Sinai. Not the least detail was left to his discretion. In the course of that season of revelation he beheld, to the minutest particular, the divine

Exod. xxxi. 3.

Exod. xxiv. 18.

ideal of the House which he should construct; and he was charged once and again to construct it thereafter. "According to all that I shew thee, the pattern of the Tabernacle, and the pattern of all the furniture thereof, even so shall ye make it. . . . See that thou make them after their pattern, which hath been shewed thee in the Mount."

Exod. xxv. 9, 40, R.V.

Thus was everything fashioned, and the Jews of later days loved to remember it. "Our fathers had the Tabernacle of the Testimony in the Wilderness, even as He appointed who spake unto Moses, that he should make it according to the figure that he had seen." The order of their traditional worship was not merely a divine institution but "a copy and shadow of the heavenly things." Their "Holy Place made with hands" was "like in pattern to the true." Heaven was hidden from their eyes, yet it

Acts vii. 44, R.V.

Heb. viii. 5; ix. 24, R.V.

was not unknown. Their Temple was an adumbration of it; and the peace and gladness which visited their souls as they waited on the Lord and, in believing use of His ordinances of atonement and absolution, entered into covenant and communion with Him, were prophetic foretastes of the blessedness which should be theirs when they passed into Heaven itself and appeared before His face.

Heb. ix. 24 R.V.

The future glory was foreshadowed by the entire order of Israel's worship, but chiefly by the holy Supper of the Passover. The Jewish saints were wont to picture the felicity of the Messiah's Kingdom under the image of a glad Feast. "Blessed are they that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God; that shall come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; that are bidden to the marriage supper of the

Lk. xiv. 15; Mt. viii. 11; Rev. xix. 9, R.V.

Lamb." And of this high festival the Paschal Supper was a foreshadowing. Its fellowship, its gladness, its thanksgiving for the great deliverance, its commemoration of the Lord's faithfulness and loving-kindness were foretastes of the exultant rapture which should flood the hearts of the redeemed when, their warfare accomplished, their victory won, they should attain to their eternal rest.

This conception was in the mind of Jesus when He gathered His disciples in the Upper Room to eat the last Passover; and He employed it for their comfort. The Feast began, according to the paschal rubric, with the mixing of a cup and the giving of thanks; and, as He observed this usage, He made a solemn announcement, at once sorrowful and cheering, telling them that it was the last time He would sit with them at an earthly

table and straightway lifting their thoughts to the better Feast in the Kingdom of Heaven. "He said unto them, 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not eat it, until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.' And He received a cup, and when He had given thanks, He said, 'Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom.'"

Lk. xxii. 15-7, R.V.; Mt. xxvi. 29.

The Holy Communion is thus a festival of hope. It carries us forward in faith and expectation to the Heavenly Feast which it foreshadows. When they gathered in the Upper Room, the Twelve were on the eve of a heavy bereavement. The Master whom they loved and to whom they had clung like children to their father, would presently be

taken from them, and they must face the world's contempt and hostility without His guidance and comfort. But He told them that their separation was only for a season. They would meet Him again in the Father's House and sit with Him at a nobler and gladder Feast.

And this consolation is offered to us even as to them. Is the Holy Table ever spread but some one takes his place among the guests with a cruel sorrow in his heart? There is a vacant place by his side. The voice is silent that used to blend with his in the psalm of thanksgiving; the hand is cold that used to take from his the cup of blessing; the head that used to bow by his in the prayer of consecration is pillowed beneath the churchyard's sod. The dear vanished past comes back to his remembrance, and his soul is flooded with desolation. It seems as though the House of

Communion must be evermore for him a place of sad regret. Nay, it is his place of comfort. For what is the message of the Holy Supper? "Courage!" it says. "Bethink you of the Heavenly Feast whereof this Table is a dim foreshadowing. Lift up your heart to the City of God and the Father's House. Your dead is there, and you will meet again in blessed reunion. You will look again upon each other's faces, and clasp each other's hands, and sit together in holier fellowship at a gladder Feast."

This surely is a hope worth cherishing, a faith worth holding fast. It makes us pilgrims indeed. Our home is not here. It is in the Heavenly Country. Our treasure is there; and the thought of the reunion which awaits us enkindles our flagging ardour and nerves us to pursue our pilgrimage to its joyful end. Yea, and it cleanses our hearts and elevates

our affections. "This world," said Rabbi Jacob, "is like a vestibule before the world to come. Prepare thyself in the vestibule, that thou mayest be admitted into the festal chamber." "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." What calamity could compare with this: to reach our journey's end and be counted unworthy of an entrance into the Holy City and a place at the Heavenly Feast?

Heb. iv. 1.

Lord of Eternity, Who hast made "all things double one against another," so that, when we look on the things seen and temporal, our hearts are lifted up to the things unseen and eternal, may this earthly Sanctuary be to us as the outer court of the Father's House, and this bread and wine a foretaste of the Heavenly Feast. Grant us, we beseech Thee,

Ecclus. xlii. 24.

a vision of "things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love Him." So shall we go on our way in hope and expectation. Amen.

1 Cor. ii. 9, R.V.

IX

ROOM IN THE FATHER'S HOUSE

THE SOUL'S AWAKENING

My soul, my soul, have done
  With sluggard sleep. Awake thee!
The end is hastening on,
  And shall it overtake thee?

O wake, and Christ entreat,
  The God who all beholdeth,
And with His presence sweet
  The Universe enfoldeth.

Greek Hymn.

ROOM IN THE FATHER'S HOUSE

TO His promise that His sorrowful disciples would sit with Him in glad reunion at a nobler Feast in the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus added another and still more inspiring encouragement. He explained to them what His departure meant and wherefore it was expedient for them that He should Jn. xvi. 7.
go away, employing for this gracious purpose a homely yet exquisitely beautiful image.

Along the highways of the East there stood, and still stand, caravanserais for the use of travellers — square enclosures with apartments round the inner side of the walls for the accommodation of the guests, and in the midst an open courtyard where they tethered

their beasts. There was usually room enough in those hospitable shelters, but at festal seasons and on other occasions when all the nation was afoot, they were crowded; and it sometimes happened that a traveller, arriving late, weary and footsore, found that every lodging was already occupied, and he must either lie down in the open or fare on his way through the darkness, exposed to the assaults of wild beasts and wilder bandits.

Lk. ii. 1-7. Thus it happened on one ever memorable occasion. Cæsar Augustus had decreed a census of the population of Palestine, and Joseph the carpenter had set out from his home in Nazareth on the long journey to Bethlehem, where, according to the Jewish custom, he must enrol himself, since it was his ancestral town. He was accompanied by his espoused wife, Mary. She was great with child, and, as they approached Bethlehem,

her time came. They sought the nearest caravanserai; but it was already full, and no one had the charity to give place to the Holy Virgin in her sore need. Some refuge she must have, and the only one that offered was the courtyard of the caravanserai. And there among the oxen and asses "she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."

The disciples must surely have heard the touching story, and in any case they knew very well how travellers fared by the way. They had often made the journey betwixt Galilee and Jerusalem, and they must have witnessed, if they had not suffered, the desolation of arriving too late and finding no room in the caravanserai. And they would understand what the Lord meant when He turned

this familiar experience into a parable of consolation and encouragement.

Their hearts were troubled. Hitherto Jesus had been their comrade, and His fellowship had cheered them on the road. With Him by their side they had smiled at weariness and danger. But now He was about to leave them, and they must pursue alone the unknown and darksome way.

It was an appalling prospect, and He soothed their alarm and rallied their courage by showing them what His departure really meant. He was not forsaking them. He was only going forward in advance to bespeak accommodation for them in the Father's House and ensure that on their arrival they should not find the door closed against them.

Jn. xiv. 1-3. "Let not," He said according to the true rendering of His words, "your heart be troubled. Believe in God; in Me also believe.

In My Father's House there are many lodging-places. If there were not, I would have told you, because I am going to prepare room for you." Yes, and He would be thinking of them, longing for them, waiting and watching for their arrival; and, while they were yet a great way off, He would see them and would hasten to meet them and bid them welcome into their Eternal Home. "If I go and prepare room for you, I am coming again, and will receive you unto Myself, that, where I am, ye also may be."

And this is our consolation and encouragement as we pursue our pilgrimage. The Father's House is yonder at the bound of the waste, and Jesus our Friend is there. All is ready against our arrival—a lodging, a place at the Feast, and a gracious welcome. We know not how near we may be to the long journey's end. The next turning of the road,

the summit of yon hill, and perhaps the Father's House will break on our view, and we shall see Jesus coming forth to greet us and take us home.

This is our hope and inspiration, that, whatever may meet our eyes when Eternity opens before us, there will be nothing to affright us; for Jesus will be there, and Jesus is our Friend. There would be no gladness in the thought of meeting a stranger, and it is only as we know Jesus and have tasted the sweetness of His love and mercy that we can anticipate the end with confidence and expectation. An experience of His grace is a well-spring of comfort and hope. It is a pledge of our interest in Him and of His interest in us. It is an earnest of "the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward." When Oliver Cromwell lay a-dying, he was vexed with memories

Rom. viii. 18, R.V.

and forebodings. His battles had been the Lord's, and he had wrought deliverance for England; nevertheless, as he remembered the blood which he had shed and the scenes of violence in which he had played his part, his soul was troubled, and he wondered if he were indeed a child of grace and an heir of glory. "Tell me," he wistfully enquired of a godly preacher who stood beside his bed, "is it possible to fall from grace?" "No," was the answer, "it is not possible." "Then," said the dying man with a sigh of relief, recalling the days when God's candle had shined upon his head, "I am safe, for I know that I was once in grace." Yes, an experience of grace is a strong consolation in every season of fainting and despondency, being a sure evidence of the soul's abiding interest in Christ. The Lord does not bless and then forsake. If He hath been mindful of us, He Ps. cxv. 12.

will bless us still. He will perfect that which concerneth us: His mercy endureth for ever, and He will not forsake the works of His own hands.

Ps. cxxxviii. 8.

Let us cherish the remembrance of His loving-kindnesses, and go forward on our pilgrimage with assured confidence and joyful expectation. Yet let us not be content with the past. Let us ever be seeking fresh experiences of His goodness and mercy. And let us think much of the day when we shall reach the Father's House and meet with Jesus. As He has gone forward thither to prepare room for us, let us keep preparing our hearts that we may meet Him without shame or confusion of face and be counted worthy to enter into that holy and blessed Home. While we journey through the wilderness, let us view everything that meets our eyes "under the aspect of eternity," bearing

ourselves as pilgrims whose citizenship is in Heaven, who have not here an abiding city, but seek after the city which is to come. Phil. iii. 20. Heb. xiii. 14, R.V.

It is indeed impossible to be always thinking of Jesus and Heaven; nor is this required of us. But it is required of us that His love should be our chief treasure and His glory our supreme end. This is heavenly-mindedness—if Jesus be never far off from us and, whenever the thought of Him presents itself to our minds, our hearts leap up in glad response without misgiving or alarm. It is told of St Francis of Sales that once, when he was playing a game of chess, he was asked reprovingly: "What if it were revealed to you that the Lord will presently return?" "I would finish the game," he answered; "it was for His glory that I began it." No employment is wrong if we can pause in the midst of it and lift up our hearts to Christ.

Lord, help us thus to live, as seeing Thee who art invisible and realising the powers of the world to come. Keep us mindful of all the love which Thou hast manifested unto us, and manifest unto us ever more and more, that our faith may be strengthened and our hope quickened day by day. Give us sweet foretastes of the joy which Thou hast prepared for us, that, as we draw nearer to the Father's House, we may more eagerly desire it. Amen.

X

THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

TALITHA CUMI

The way was rough and dreary,
The wind was bitter and cold,
And the little lamb—it was weary,
And longing for the fold.

The Shepherd lifted it gently,
And gathered it with His arm;
And there it nestled securely,
And slumbered soft and warm.

It slept, though the way was dreary,
Though the wind was bitter and cold;
And woke, never more to be weary,
In the Gentle Shepherd's fold.

THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

THE twenty-third Psalm is very good for pilgrims. It is entitled by the Rabbinical editor "a Psalm of David," and it is pleasant to think it so; only the Psalmist was not David the great King but David the young shepherd who kept his father Jesse's sheep on the pasture-lands of Bethlehem, those fields where a thousand years later the shepherds were keeping watch over their flock by night when the Angel appeared and told them the glad tidings of the Saviour's birth.

1 Sam. xvii. 12-5.

Lk. ii. 8-12.

And, that we may understand the Psalm and perceive the beauty of it, we must bear this in mind, that the Psalmist,

whoever he may have been, was a shepherd.

And what a shepherd! how faithful and how tender to his silly sheep! He could conceive naught better for himself than that the Lord should be his shepherd and deal with him as he dealt with his flock, displaying to him a like compassion.

What a shepherd he must have been, how faithful, how tender, ere he could discover in his shepherd-craft a parable and a revelation of the Good Shepherd's love! Imagine a carter who desires naught better for himself than that God should be his driver and treat him as he treats his beast; or a father whose heart leaps up in glad consent to the prayer "Our Father which art in Heaven," well content that God's relation to him should resemble his to the children of his love and care. Even thus it was with our Psalmist. His

shepherd-craft discovered to him the loving-kindness of the Lord, and he was glad to reckon himself among the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Ps. xcv. 7.

With a thankful heart he thus, according to the true rendering, recounts the mercies of his Shepherd-God:

"In pastures of green grass He maketh me to couch; beside waters of refreshment He leadeth me.

"My soul He bringeth back." Here is the grand thought of redemption. It is a picture of the Good Shepherd going in quest of His lost sheep and bringing it home on His shoulders rejoicing. Lk. xv. 3-7.

"I was wandering and weary,
When my Saviour came unto me;
For the ways of sin grew dreary,
And the world had ceased to woo me:

And I thought I heard Him say,
As He came along His way,
O silly souls! come near Me;
My sheep should never fear Me;
I am the Shepherd True."

"He guideth me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

Consider this last clause in the catalogue of mercies. What are "paths of righteousness"? It might naturally be supposed that they are paths where the righteous walk; and this would be a reasonable and profitable interpretation. But it is open to an obvious objection. If such were its meaning, the phrase would be out of keeping with the rest of the Psalm, intruding into the picture of the Shepherd and His sheep a touch which has nothing pastoral about it.

And the truth is that it is a Hebrew idiom, one which frequently occurs on the pages of
Lev. xix. 36. the Holy Scriptures. Thus, "just balances,"

literally "balances of righteousness," are properly balances which do what balances should do, serving the use for which balances are made. Again, when our Lord in His parable of the Shrewd Factor speaks of "the mammon of unrighteousness," He does not mean mammon or riches unrighteously acquired, but earthly wealth which, unlike the unfailing treasure in the heavens, eludes and disappoints, after the manner of the Apples of Sodom in the Jewish fable, fair and luscious to the eye but turning to bitter ashes in the mouth.

Lk. xvi. 9.

Lk. xii. 33.

And thus, according to the Hebrew idiom, "paths of righteousness" are paths which do what paths should do, fulfilling the purpose for which paths are made—paths which bring the traveller home.

It is a pastoral metaphor in full accord with the rest of the Psalm; and if you have

experience of the moorland where the sheep pasture, you will understand it. As you wade through the heather, you suddenly strike a path which runs on straight and distinct; and you follow it, thinking that it will carry you through the tangle. And so it does for a little; but presently, as suddenly as it appeared, it disappears, and you are again on the trackless moor. What is this elusive path? It is a sheep-track. The creatures know, by the instinct which God has given them, where their pasture lies; and, when they have cropped one patch, they make for another, following their leader in long procession, and the multitude of little feet beats a roadway. On reaching the fresh pasture they disperse, and the path vanishes.

Such deceitful tracks were called in Hebrew "paths of unrighteousness." It is not in paths like these that the Good Shepherd

leads His sheep. He guides them in "paths of righteousness"—paths which conduct to the Fold.

On the western coast of Scotland there is an island with a considerable town; and away at the northern end, nine miles from the town if one follows the road round the shore, lies a fisher hamlet. One morning in the late Autumn a woman in one of the cottages found that her child, after a restless night, was very ill; and, as the day wore on, it proved that terrible malady, croup, which develops so rapidly and, unless promptly treated, ends fatally. The doctor must be had if the little life was to be saved; but he was far away in the town, and there was no messenger to go for him, since the men-folk were all out at sea with their boats and nets. And in any case it would have taken time for the messenger to go and the doctor to come,

and there was no time to lose. So the anxious mother wrapped the little sufferer in her plaid and set out to carry him to the town. It was a nine miles' journey by the road, but it would be shorter if she struck across the moor. And she thought she could find the way. She had only to keep southward, and she would arrive at her destination.

As she pushed forward with nervous haste, the evening closed in and a mist came up from the sea, hiding the landscape. She held on; but still she did not reach the town, and she began to fear that she had gone astray. Suddenly she came upon a path. Ah! she was right now. The path must lead to the town, and she followed it eagerly, straining her choking child to her breast and expecting every moment to spy the glimmer of the town's lights.

Suddenly the path ceased, and she was labouring over the heather amid the deepening gloom. Then she found it again, and her hope revived only to die when once more it failed her. Thus she groped on, till the child gave a last choking sob and was still. It was useless to go farther, and she sat down on a boulder which she stumbled over, clasping her piteous burden, till the morning broke.

And then, as the darkness lifted and the mist melted away, she looked about her, and what did she see? A hamlet down yonder beside the grey sea, and a cottage which she knew well—her own home which she had left yesterday. She had been lost on the moor the livelong night, following the sheep-tracks, those "paths of unrighteousness," and she was back at her starting-point with her dead child in her arms.

We do not wander thus if the Lord be our

Shepherd. He guides us in paths of righteousness which conduct safe and sure to the journey's end. He does not drive, He leads us; for this is the manner of the Eastern shepherd. "The sheep hear his voice: and
Jn. x. 3-4. he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." And this is the pilgrim-life—following Jesus, holding Him in view, and treading where He has gone before us and marked the way with His footprints. It may be a rough and difficult way, where our feet bleed and our hearts grow faint and weary. But courage! It is His way. It is the path of righteousness, and it leads home—home to the City of God and the Father's House.

Thou Blessed Spirit, who camest when Jesus went away that we might not be left

desolate, be unto us in His room; for is not this Thine office? Reveal Him unto us, and lay His love home to our hearts. When our faith is ready to die, revive it; when our hope burns low, rekindle it; when our feet slip, hold us up; and ever in the multitude of our thoughts within us let Thy comforts delight our souls. Be the comrade of our pilgrimage, continually attending us in gracious ministration. In the noontide's glare be Thou unto us as an overshadowing cloud, sheltering us from the heat and hiding from us the vanities which would allure us. In the darkness be as a light upon our path, dispelling the mists which enfold us, and purging our dim eyes that they may see the breaking of the Eternal Day.

O spread Thy cov'ring wings around,
Till all our wand'rings cease,
And at our Father's lov'd abode
Our souls arrive in peace. Amen.

"I see myself now at the end of my journey: my toilsome days are ended. I am going to see that head which was crowned with thorns, and that face which was spit upon for me. I have formerly lived by hearsay and faith; but now I go where I shall live by sight, and shall be with Him in whose company I delight myself. I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of; and wherever I have seen the print of his shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too. His name has been to me a civet-box; yea, sweeter than all perfumes. His voice to me has been most sweet; and his countenance I have more desired than they that have most desired the light of the sun. His words I did use to gather for my food, and for antidotes against my faintings. He has held me, and hath kept me from my iniquities; yea, my steps have been strengthened in his way."

JOHN BUNYAN.

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